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Part I.—GENERAL INFORMATION.

CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

BAHRAIN is an independent Arab State ruled by His Highness Shaikh Sulman bin Hamed al-Khalifah, K.C.M.G., K.C.I.E. The state consists of an archipelago of small low-lying islands situated about half-way down the Persian Gulf, some 20 miles from the Arab coast and slightly less distant from the Qatar Peninsular. In the past Bahrain owed its importance to its position as the centre of the pearl industry of the Persian Gulf; today it is better known for its oil field and refinery. 101

"Bahrain" or more correctly "al-Bahrain" means "The Two Seas" and this name, which was formerly applied to the whole coast of Eastern Arabia from Kuwait to Qatar, has long puzzled Arab philologists. Many derivations of the name have been suggested. One is that the two seas are the Persian Gulf and the pool of sweet water below the sands which irrigates the gardens of Qatif and Bahrain. Another, suggested by the writer al-Ashari, is that there was once a great salt lake near Hasa, which was the second of the two seas. A third suggestion is that the name "Bahrain" has some connection with the submarine springs (Ar. singular 'Ain) of fresh water that are found in many places along the coast of Arabia. However a serious objection to this theory is that 'Ain starts with an Arabic letter which is not present in the spelling of "Bahrain." There are other places called Bahrain in Egypt, North Africa and in Persia. 103

There are five principal islands in the group, whose total area is approximately 231 square miles; the largest is Bahrain itself, which is about 30 miles long and from 8 to 10 miles wide. A causeway 1½ miles in length, carrying a motor road, links Manama, capital of the State, which is on the north-east tip of Bahrain island, with the neighbouring town and island of Muharraq. Half-way down the east coast of Bahrain a bridge connects Bahrain with Sitra island. Among the other islands of the group are Nebih Salih, north of Sitra, whose prolific fresh water springs irrigate the date groves which cover the island and which are said to be the best in Bahrain; Jidda, a small rocky islet off the west coast of Bahrain, now used as a penal settlement; and Umm an-Nasaan, a large low-lying island to the south-west of Jidda, which H.H. The Ruler has developed as a breeding place for gazelle and black buck. 131

Some miles south of Bahrain and very near the coast of Qatar are the 16 islands of the Howar group, the largest of which is 11 miles in

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Part III.—AROUND BAHRAIN.

MANAMA

361 THE capital of Bahrain, Manama, with a population, in 1950, of 39,648, is situated on the low lying coast at the north end of Bahrain Island. Most parts of the town are only two or three feet above sea level and close below the ground there is brackish water which accounts for the excessive humidity during the summer. The town extends for 1½ miles along the northern shore and about the same distance down the east coast. [103] Although Manama, which means "The Place of Sleeping," is known to have existed in the 15th century and is mentioned by the Portuguese, it contains no ancient buildings, and possibly the oldest relic of the past is the tomb of Shaikh Ahmed al-Khalifah, who conquered Bahrain in 1782, situated near the Awal Cinema.

The most attractive view of Manama is from the sea. Approaching the port from Saudi Arabia one sees a long line of tall, white houses with deep-shadowed verandahs, rising above the brilliantly coloured water. Around the Customs Pier, which extends for a quarter of a mile into the sea, there are usually 70 or 80 local sailing craft and launches whose crews and cargoes fill the pier to overflowing. The skyline of the town is broken by two or three minarets, the tallest being that of the Juma Mosque, while on the shore to the east of the town can be seen the graceful wind-towers which were used to catch the breeze before the days of electric fans and air-conditioning.

342 Most of the houses are built from coral stone, quarried from the bed of the sea at low tide, plastered and painted white. A noticeable feature of Bahrain architecture is the use of large flat sheets of coral stone set between masonry pillars in the walls of the houses. In some districts of the town there are still numbers of "barastis", huts made of palm branches, but these are rapidly being replaced by stone and cement houses.

361 344 The centre of the town is Shaikh Sulman Square with, on the north, the Pier and the Customs premises and on the south "Bab al-Bahrain," the Gate of Bahrain, a large block of Government offices with an archway in the centre leading through to the principal street in the bazaar. In the centre of the Square is a circular garden, the walls of which are made from cement panels decorated with traditional Bahraini designs, arabesques, of pleasing appearance. The bazaar extends for some distance on each side of Barrett Road, the main street. To its west are the Municipal Buildings and an open market where, on Wednesday mornings, the people of the villages bring their produce to sell.

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The Manama bazaar rightly claims to be the emporium of the Gulf, it contains both narrow streets of picturesque little shops, full

to the days when the Rulers of Bahrain lived here and ruled the Islands from the castle. Below the fortresss is the spring of Hanani, whose water is the best in Bahrain, and a plain where, in the rainy season, a small lake forms and on disappearing leaves in its place a bright lawn of grass. Rifaa has been expanding rapidly during recent years, the town is spreading to the south-east, and it now possesses boys' and girls' schools and a Municipality. Some members of the Ruling Family still live in the town which has expanded owing to the development of the oil industry, in which some 500 of its male inhabitants are working.

The situation of the town is ideal for strategical purposes, from it it is possible to see Manama, Muharraq and Sitra while the land around it is free of vegetation which could have served to hide the enemy. It has an excellent climate and is drier than Manama in the summer. To the north of the town are two small graves where members of the Khalifah family are buried; these fell in battle during a civil war which took place in the 19th century.

There is a tradition connected with the fortress of Rifaa. It is said to have been built in the 17th century by the Wazir of the then Ruler, a certain Shaikh Jabbara. For years the Ruler and his wazir worked together, but one day the Shaikh was told about the beauty of the wazir's wife, and he desired her. He was tricked into believing that he had visited her, though in fact he was entertained by her maid-servant. He was so angry at the deception, about which the wazir knew nothing, that he killed him. The Wazir's widow thereupon fled from Rifaa to the mainland, from where she wrote to the Shah of Persia sending him a minature palm tree of pearls and gold and saying that so rich was Bahrain that such a tree was given to a child as a toy. She succeeded in exciting the avarice of the Persian Shah, who sent an army to Bahrain, defeated and killed Shaikh Jabbara, and annexed the Islands to Persia, thus avenging the Wazir's wife. This same Shaikh Jabbara is said to have lived in the fort of Amr, south-east of the Jebel, which is mentioned in Chapter VIII.

There is a third Rifaa, a small community built by BAPCO for its Indian and Pakstani employees; this is mentioned in the Chapter on Bahrain's Oil.

AWALI

Meaning "The High Places," this name was given by Shaikh Hamed, the late Ruler of Bahrain, to the oil camp when it was first established in its present location. Before the oil company arrived in Bahrain the site was deserted—for who would live in the middle of a waterless desert? But the company wanted to build their town near the oil field, and so the small, 240 foot, hill was chosen. Today Awali somewhat resembles a London surburb or a small American town. As in London, varied gardens and different coloured exteriors of the houses serve to disguise their basic similarity. In these gardens children play while their mothers chat to each other over the fences. Happy

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About midway of the Persian Gulf and some fifteen miles off the coast of Arabia, lie the Bahrein Islands at the mouth of the Gulf of Bahrein, of which the Qatar Peninsula forms the western side. There are five principal islands, only two of which are of real consequence. The largest and by far the most important is variously called Awal, Al Manāmah after the principal city, or more commonly just Bahrein. The last is the modern designation.

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In ancient times, the name "Bahrein" was applied to a larger area which included the Arabian mainland of Qatar and Hajar and the land situated between Mesopotamia and the Gulf of Oman (the Indian Ocean); this area took in the entire southern coast of the Persian Gulf. This has caused widespread misinterpretation of much of the writings of pre-Islamic and Medieval historians. Throughout this book we shall use the term "Bahrein" in its modern sense to refer to the archipelago of Bahrein proper or to the central island, except where the mainland province is clearly indicated.

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Bahrein today has few attractions. There is not much to recommend it as a place of residence, as it is intensely hot for about seven months of the year, and for many of the native inhabitants lacking in comfortable living conditions. For tourists it is rather off the beaten track. Nevertheless, through the centuries these bits of land have been considered well worth fighting for by both European and Asiatic empires.

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The reason for Bahrein's unusual and enduring importance can be summed up in two words—pearls and strategy. The pearl fisheries of Bahrein have been known all over the world since the dawn of history and, thanks to an abundance of fresh water springs, the island was a frequent stopping place for ships on the trade routes to India and the Far East.

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The Portuguese, the first European power to have an Asiatic colonial empire, fought hard for possession of the islands.

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THE BAHREIN ISLANDS

THE NAME

"The name of Bahrein, which means 'Two Seas,' is derived, according to the natives of the country, from the existence of two strata of water located there. The higher film is extremely salty, whereas the deeper consists of sweet water with a very pleasant taste." So wrote Masoudi, the famous Arabian author.

Ibn Khallakan has a different explanation. He cites the Persian lexicographer Al-Ashari as follows: "Al-Bahrein ('The Two Seas') is so named because in the region where its towns are situated, near the gate of Al-Ahsa and the village of Hajar, there is a lake at ten parsangs distance from the Great Green Ocean [the Persian Gulf]. The lake is three miles long and as many broad. It does not overflow, and its waters are tranquil and salt."

According to Al-Jawahari, the author of *Sahah,* the inhabitants are called Bahrani rather than the more usual form Bahri, because "the latter term might be misunderstood, having as it does another meaning, namely 'Belonging to the sea.' "[1]

GEOGRAPHY

The Bahrein Islands are situated at 26° latitude north and 50° longitude east on the southern side of the Persian Gulf. They are about fifteen miles from the main coast of Saudi

1. Throughout this book, however, we shall use the modern designation "Bahreini" when referring to the people.

[pp. 10, 11, 12 have no textual material]

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Table 4. NON-MOSLEM POPULATION

Hindus	150
Jews	50
Syrians	60
British	10
Assyro-Chaldeans	5
Total	255

Table 5. SECTS AND TRIBES

Tribe	Race	Sect
Utūb	Zuzara Arabs	Malekites
Bahārinah	Iranians	Shiites
Dawāsir	Arabs of Nejd	Sahabites
Huwāla	Arabs of Persia	Sunnites

The discovery of oil, the essence of foreign trade and international traffic, has brought a considerable increase in the number of non-Moslem residents. At the present time there are some four or five hundred Christians, mostly employees of the Standard Oil Company, five hundred Jews, and about the same number of Hindus.

TOWNS AND VILLAGES

There are about two hundred centers of population in the islands. The most important are:

Bahrein Island

MANAMA,[1] the largest city and the commercial center of the islands, is located in the northern part of Bahrein. It is traditional headquarters for the pearl fisheries and today is the center of the petroleum industry. At present there are about 45,000 inhabitants. The city has a government operated electric plant which also supplies the city of Muharraq on Muharraq Island, and commercial establishments include an ice plant, a large

1. Manāmah literally means a "scala" or "port."

Bapco" has some two hundred homes for married members of the oil company staff and others are under construction. In addition there are office buildings, bachelors' quarters, a club, an eighteen hole golf course, a restaurant, and a new, completely air conditioned hospital for the native employees of the company. All homes and living quarters and most of the commercial buildings are connected with three central air conditioning plants where water is chilled to a temperature of forty-five to fifty degrees Fahreinheit then piped underground to each building, where it is circulated through grilles. In the winter heat is furnished by circulating hot water in the same manner. All drinking water in both the refinery and camp is distilled.

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The other villages of importance on the west coast, reading from north to south, are:

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HUWAR—Located close to the coast of Qatar.
HAMALA.
DAMISTAN.
KARZAKKAN.
MALIKIYA.
SADAD.
SHAHRAKAN.
DAR KULAIB.

On the east coast, from north to south, the important villages are:

JUFAR.
GHURAIFA, with a loading terminal and a nearby military seaplane base with anchorage facilities and limited refueling service.
SILHAT.
KUWARA.
SANAD.
NUWAIDRAT, near the refinery. It has palm groves and is an important center of native trade, where most of the local employees of the oil company live.
MA'AMIR, a small village located on the canal separating the island of Sitra from Bahrein.
FARSIYA.

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175 and destroyed a number of the cities of the Persian littoral. These expeditions provoked a war with the Bowid dynasty of Persia, whose army was able to occupy Oman and a great part of the southern coast of the Persian Gulf and drive the Karmats out. But the latter, though terribly weakened, succeeded, despite Persian efforts, in maintaining themselves at Hasa. When the Moslem traveler, Nasir Khosrow, visited the Gulf in 1050, Hasa and the island of Bahrein belonged to six Karmatian chiefs, who ruled it jointly with their six advisory ministers. The capital of Bahrein was even then an important city. Date plantations flourished and pearls were fished, half of the pearls found going to the chiefs.

Serious trouble resulting in the fall of the Karmats began on the island of Bahrein shortly after the visit of Nasir Khosrow. The Bahreinis refused to pay additional taxes demanded by the Karmats, and revolted. Their leader, Abul Bahlul, defeated the Karmat forces and declared himself Emir of the country. He did not long enjoy the fruits of his victory, however, for in 1076 the island became a tributary of Yahya, a chief of Qatif on the mainland of Arabia.

It was at this time that the expeditions of the Seljoucids took place, resulting in the complete annihilation of the Karmats. The disappearance of Karmat power left the chiefs of the little tribe of the Uyunis[1] as masters of Hasa. Abdallah, the founder of this dynasty, conquered Bahrein in 1081 and his heirs assumed the powers of the family of Yahya.

These new conquerors, like their forerunners, did not long remain in power, for they were forced to recognize the sovereignty of the rulers of Kish, who policed the Gulf in the name of the Caliph.

The little island of Kish (or Qais) had belonged since the twelfth century to a local dynasty of merchant origin, the Beni Kaisar, who had extended their influence over the coast of the Persian Gulf, and whose fleet controlled the trade with

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1. The Uyunis took their name from the district of Uyun, in the north of Hasa. *Uyun*, which means "the springs," is so called because of the large number of springs (nearly four hundred) that water its date plantations and fields.